

Boxborough Energy Committee January 2014 Minutes

Date/Location: Wednesday, January 8, 2014, Town Hall

Attending: Members: Francie Nolde, Margo Webber, Santiago Tapia-Perez, Richard Garrison, Abby Reip, Larry Grossman

BOS Representative: Raid Suleiman

Guests: Becky Busby, Erin Brandt, MAPC, David Lindberg

Members Absent: Kesahva Srivastava

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2014, Town Hall.

Minutes

General business

- December minutes were approved. Next meeting will be February 12, 2014 and Erin Brandt will oversee an energy workgroup/forum. See main discussion below for more information.
- Larry has measured all windows, has met with Selina and decided on a color and is drafting up an order form for the Town Hall insulated blinds. Larry will contact Selina to determine if she wants all windows or just the Grange Hall windows. Dave indicated that Selina wants the downstairs windows to have shades also so the building looks consistent. Dave thought that Selina had drafted an order for shades. Larry will work with Selina to compare the orders, costs and installation.
- Abby has drafted an article for the Beacon about the money Boxborough has saved by installing compactors for the recycling. Abby will forward the draft to the committee members for review.
- Raid will talk to Selina about putting in a place holder for the Energy Committee to request money for audits of Town Buildings at the May Town Meeting. All articles must be submitted by February 24, 2014
- Dave Lindberg is still working on getting quotes for insulating the Town Hall. The insulation industry has changed.

Main Discussion

Erin Brandt of Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) attended the energy meeting as part of the LEAP2 grant. (LEAP stands for Local Energy Action Plan). MAPC is a regional planning group out of Boston that has begun working on energy upgrades at municipalities within the MAPC area. MAPC's Clean Energy program is two years old. The first phase of the program began in 2012 with a grant application and MAPC working with 8 communities. Four of the communities were served by a Municipal Light Plant (MUNI's) and four were served by one of the large utilities such as National Grid or NSTAR. Erin brought a report that was generated by MAPC for the Reading Municipal Light Plant (RMLP) and the four communities served by RMLP. The first phase of LEAP was a success and now MAPC is proceeding with Phase II. Boxborough applied for and received a grant for technical assistance from MAPC.

This grant will provide the Town of Boxborough with technical assistance and guidance in developing an energy plan for the Town of Boxborough. Phase II will last for one year and will tap in to the lessons learned from Phase I. Erin found the Municipal electric plants, in some ways, were easier to work with than the larger Utilities because they turned projects around quickly and didn't have the political and bureaucratic oversight the larger utilities have.

Erin will be the facilitator for the Town of Boxborough and will be assisted by two other planners from MAPC and one or two interns. She wants a "Working group" that will consist of energy committee members, some Town Employees, and some outside residential, environmental, commercial and industrial representation. The whole group will need to meet a couple times. The first meeting would be a brainstorm meeting in February. Various members of the energy committee have agreed to contact people from Cisco, Holiday Inn, the School, Real Estate agents and environmental committees to see if they would be interested in participating in the work group. (See action items.)

Before the February work group meeting, Erin and her planners will meet with Littleton Electric and Light Department (LELD) to learn about what LELD has done in the past, the history of LELD working with Boxborough, and what LELD is willing to offer Boxborough or the group. She would like LELD to work with Boxborough and help out, but not feel pressurized and back off. When Erin was working with Reading Municipal Plant, she found that if asked for help, RMLD was willing to offer some money and assistance. Nothing had been offered in the past because no one had asked.

Erin's second step will be to develop an energy profile for the Town. She will download the municipal data from the MassEnergy Insight (MEI) website. She will ask LELD if they have electric data for the residential, commercial and industrial units in Boxborough so they can get a broad idea of the electrical consumption in Boxborough. She will also inquire if data can be downloaded to the MEI website on a routine basis. Regarding heating costs, most homes heat with Oil, but there is a small portion of residential units, plus all municipal buildings, that use Natural gas from National Grid (NGrid). Since oil use by residents can't be monitored, (there are a number of independent oil deliveries that deliver oil in Town), Erin will try to work with NGrid to determine how many residential units are served by NGrid and how much natural gas residential units use. This data should provide a heating benchmark for residential use. Erin will also look in to the availability of audits for homeowners. She will determine if LELD and NGrid offer free audits or for cost audits? Are there grants available for home owners or commercial establishments to do audits? What financing mechanisms do LELD and NGrid have (if any)? The programs that are currently available will be summarized.

After accumulating all the available electric, gas, oil and renewable use, Erin will generate a profile of energy use by Boxborough Municipal Buildings, residents and establishments and a summary of existing incentives and programs available. In February, Erin will meet with the workgroup to brainstorm goals for the community and to develop an action plan to meet these goals. Ideas will be prioritized and energy goals established. The committee should determine if the Town would like to establish reduction goals like those required in the Green community act (20% reduction), or implement the Stretch code.

Financing of upgrades and retrofits should also be discussed. The State may provide grants to Towns served by MUNI's, but other funding sources for audits, upgrades and retrofits must be determined. Some facilities offer free or half funded audits, requiring homeowners to fund the remaining half. If money will be funded by the Town, then a request for the money must be submitted as an article for the May Town Meeting by February 24, 2014.

Following the February workgroup, Erin and staff will analyze the data, the goals and the priorities and come up with a work plan. The outline will be presented to the group and a local energy plan will be drafted with short and long term goals.

Action Items

- Abby will send everyone the article she wrote for the web site and for the Beacon on the money Boxborough has saved by installing a recycling compactor.
- Larry will finalize the cost estimates for the insulated blind order for the Town Hall windows and meet with Selina.
- Richard will meet with Kerin Crockett and Jason at the Blanchard School and explain what he learned about the Power down program in Acton.
- All members will contact people they think would be good for an energy workgroup. Margo will contact Darryl Beardsley of Cisco, Raid will contact Howard Sobel of Holiday Inn, Abby will contact Kerin Crockett and Kristen Hilberg and Francie will contact Jim Snyder-Grant, Rita Grossman and Kate Crosby.